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# A Message from the Navy Surgeon General: Promoting a Culture of Safety Across Navy Medicine

Filed under HEATH, HOSPITALS, LEADERSHIP (NO COMMENTS)



Patient Safety

A culture of safety, along with leadership and robust process improvement, are the key foundations of any high reliability organization.



**By Vice Adm. Matthew L. Nathan**

As many command activities come to an end in recognition of National Patient Safety Awareness week, I ask for an “all hands” effort to continue to promote patient safety as a year round focus — especially as Navy Medicine, along with the rest of the Military Health System (MHS), pursues our journey towards high reliability.

A culture of safety, along with leadership and robust process improvement, are the key foundations of any high reliability organization.

Our willingness to all — patients and staff – to

speak up when we recognize potentially unsafe situations or events is a critical component of this effort and the cornerstone of a learning organization. Without the trust that such events will be celebrated and not punished, a culture of safety cannot exist.

I expect our staff members and patients to feel safe in expressing concerns and asking questions. Every patient experience should be a safe haven for care. Our patients must trust

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that we have their back. We do that in the belief that patient safety comes first.

Don't look at patient safety as a "program"— it is the responsibility of every one of us, at every level in the organization. Leaders must celebrate individuals who speak up and create a culture in which each staff member is an ambassador for our patients. Each of us must show and encourage respect for anyone who raises a concern, identifies a risk, or proposes a solution. As a true learning organization, we must be critical in our self-assessments and use them as opportunities to improve. We are constantly striving to do better and get it right for our patients.

As you may be aware, we have been given Secretary of Defense direction to use High Reliability Organization (HRO) principles as a framework to move the MHS forward in the areas of patient safety and quality. Multiple initiatives have started under the umbrella of "HRO" across the MHS, the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) headquarters, the Regions and our Military Treatment Facilities. To align those efforts, BUMED hosted a two-day planning summit with Region and BUMED subject matter experts to plot the way forward. Over the next several months, enterprise-level initiatives will be identified and communicated to every level across Navy Medicine.

I am confident our high reliability journey will garner greater faith in Navy Medicine as a health care system of choice for our warfighters and families.

To the Navy Medicine enterprise, I thank you for your continued selfless service and dedication to our mission. I am humbled to be your shipmate and it is my honor to serve with you.

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